



STUDIES

FOR

POEMS.

BY

CLAUDE BERWICK.

(Mr. A. S. Hays)

A schematic diagram of a 10x10 grid of points. The top row of points is labeled with the numbers 1 through 10. The bottom row of points is labeled with the letters A through J. The grid is used to illustrate the concept of a 'line of sight' between points, where a line is drawn from a point in the top row to a point in the bottom row, passing through other points in the grid.

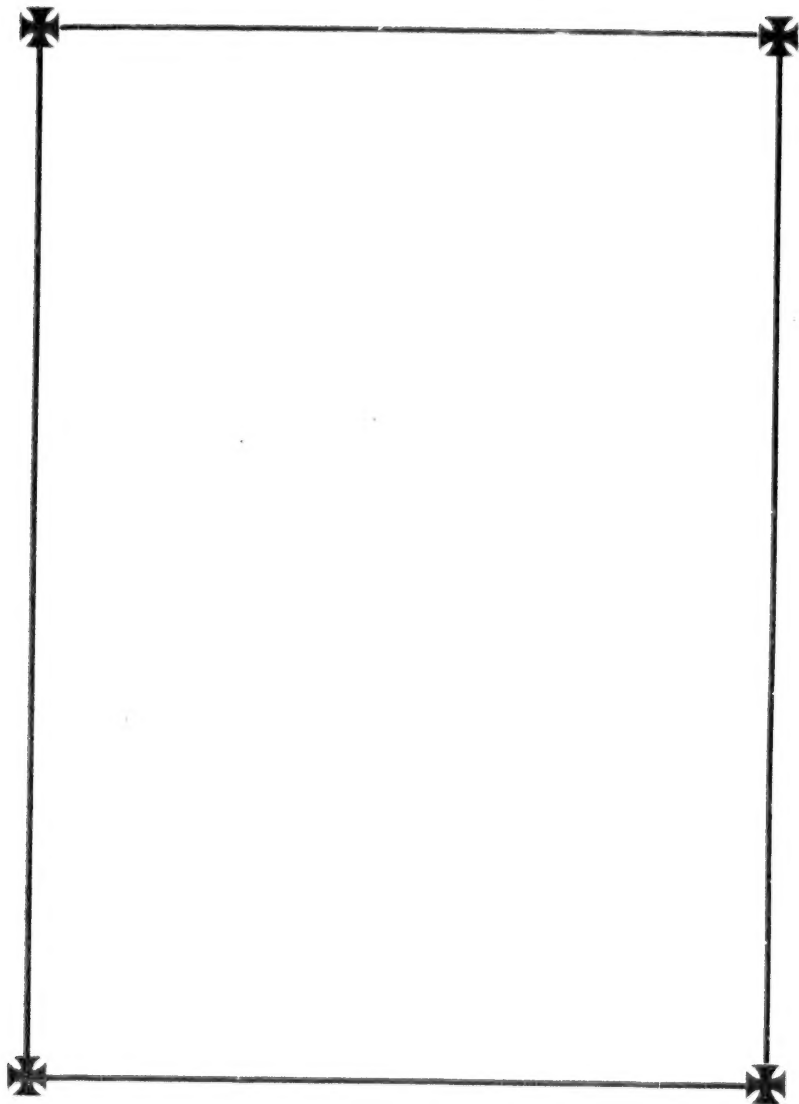


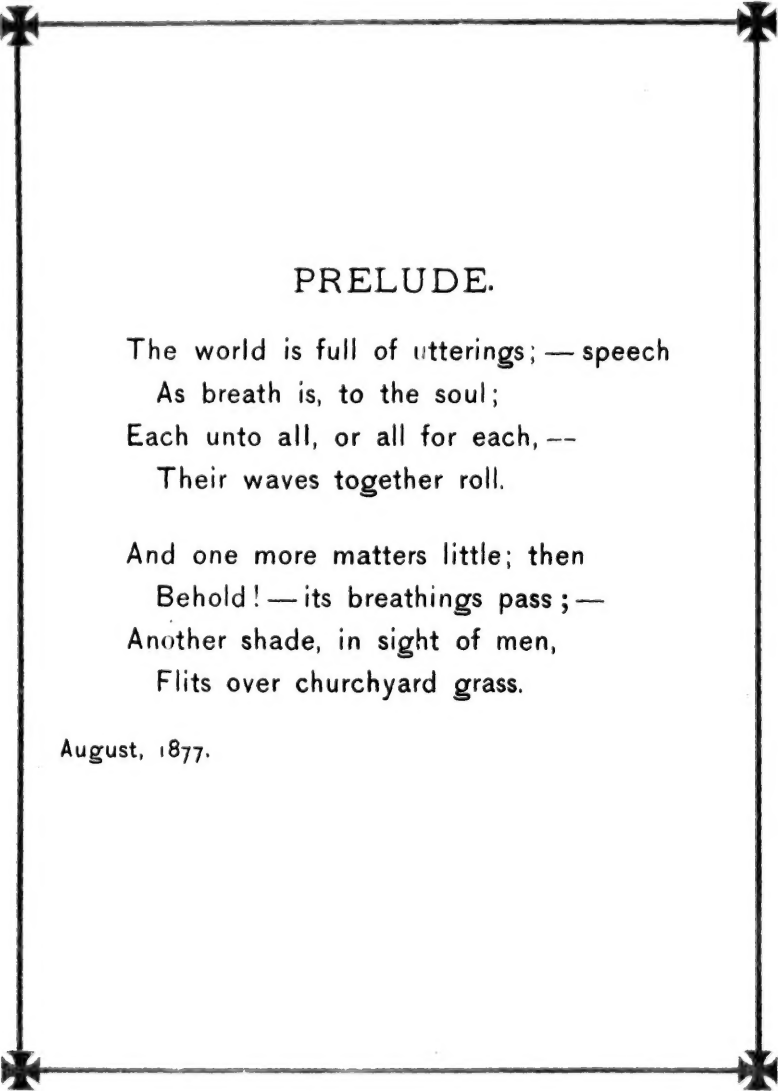
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TO
The Sweet and Saving Memory
of
Louisa Davenport Frothingham,
Who Died December, 1876.

This volume is inscribed.

Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and
weep with them that weep
As ye have done it unto the least of these,
ye have done it unto Me



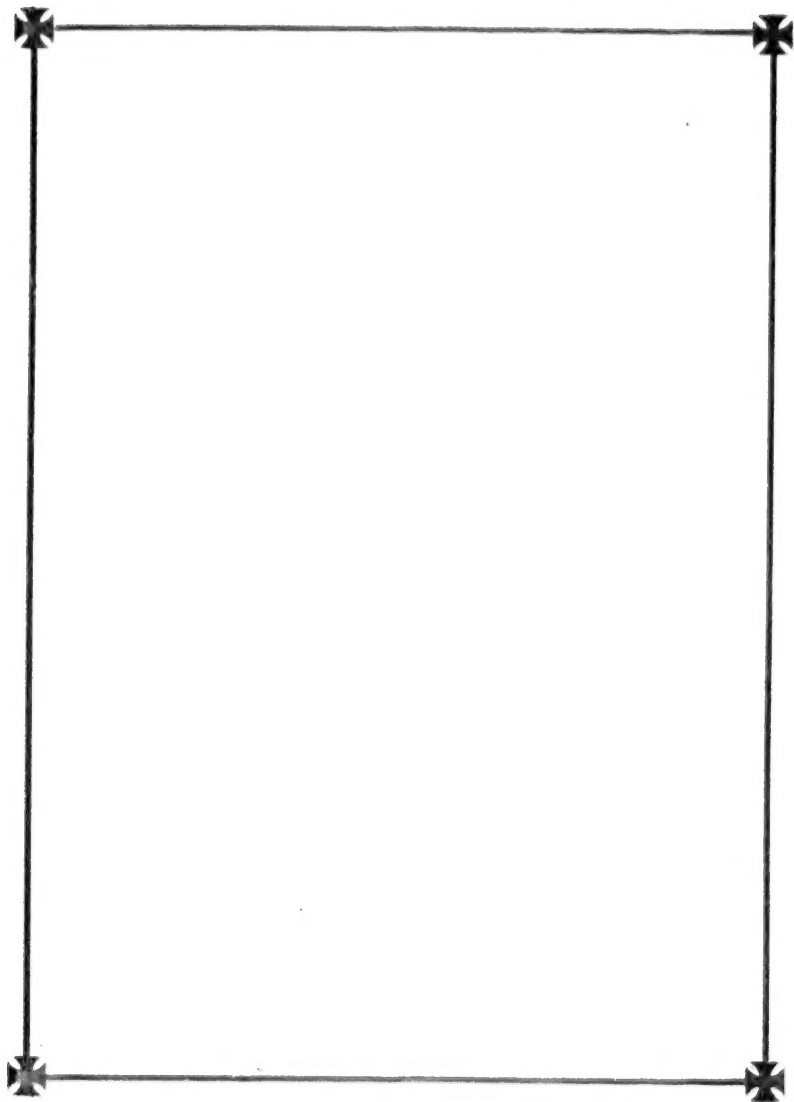


PRELUDE.

The world is full of utterings; — speech
As breath is, to the soul;
Each unto all, or all for each, —
Their waves together roll.

And one more matters little; then
Behold! — its breathings pass; —
Another shade, in sight of men,
Flits over churchyard grass.

August, 1877.



TO MY SISTER OF THE SACRED
HEART.

(TRINITA DEI MONTI, ROME, FEBRUARY, 1871.)



Y Sister! In your thoughts of me.
Trust not these mortal sighs.
PRESS on my heart your hand,—and see
The longing in my eyes!
How many a picture Fancy drew
In the proud days of yore,
Vanished in blackness, as she knew
Her suns could shine no more!
Into the dust her life she flung,—
Its bloom to ashes passed;
But from those ashes, Sister, sprung,
A flower more sweet at last.

•
STUDIES FOR POEMS.

I hold, in my heart's treasury,
That lovely heart of yours!
I wonder, in your thoughts of me,—
If the same spell endures!—
I wonder, in the quietness
That fills your lofty days,—
Through those calm hours, when they
suppress
Their *outward* prayer and praise,
I wonder,—nay, I wonder not,
O Sister, fair and sweet,
That memory seeks some sacred spot
To worship at your feet!

Perhaps,—through all we feel of worth
Steals the dissolvent, — Pain;
Perhaps, my sister, not on earth
Are we to meet again;
But O, God-cherished, loveliest one,
Who hushed a stranger's sighs,

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

And gave to view that Mercy's sun
Whose radiance filled her eyes,—
Perhaps, — when stilled these notes below,—
When passed this earthly shore,—
In thee my grateful heart shall know
Christ's image, evermore.

L'AFFINITÀ.

(THE SAME TO THE SAME.)



HE fixed her eyes upon the wall
So aged, worn, and dim;
The faded frescoes shone o'er all
Like wings of seraphim!
The Altar gleamed, all radiantly
Set from her grief apart;
She had her thoughts in days gone by,
Her hand upon her heart.

“Ah, Lord, Redeemer!” still she cries,
Her eyes too dim with tears
To see, if they were near, the skies—
“How *far* Thy love appears!

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

I cannot feel, I cannot know

Aught save my misery.

Lord! as Thou pitiest all below,

Thou *must* remember me!

.. Thou hast said,—‘Whoever comes to Me

Cast out, I will not;’—there!

Whence then these floods of misery,

These witherings of despair?

Lord! if but one least, outward sign

Came to me from Thy grace,—

It would be, to this soul of mine,

As I had seen Thy face!”

Her voice dropped down; her heart grew faint;

As stiffening into stone,

She, now released from prayer and plaint,

Sat in the church alone;

Alone!—Before that holy shrine,

Lost in one cloud of fear,—

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

How little might she guess, the sign
She asked for, was so near!

She felt the flutterings of her strife
Slowly, to quiet, tend;
For even such passion brings, like life,—
Its own *appointed* end;
Lay round her stillness of the tomb—
Unbroke by sign or word;
When from some far-off nook of gloom
A crouching figure stirred.

It was a figure,—though forlorn,
Yet with some touch of grace;
Shades, that not time, but strife, had worn,
Marked all the down-cast face;
The dark robes rustled as she moved
Swift from her lone retreat;
Yet scarce even listener's ear had proved
That tread of noiseless feet.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

On,—over many a sculptured stone;
How calm they sleep below!
On,—where the painted hues were strown
To flush the marble's glow,—
She passed. So resolute and true
The purpose in her face,
Its weary lines grew soft to view
Returned some by-gone grace.

Still in her reverie drooped the Nun;—
That giant sorrow's spell
All that she knew beneath the sun,—
When on her shoulder fell
A touch.—She, starting, looked in eyes
That flashed upon her there,
Where some strange sweetness seemed to rise
Mixed with a strange despair.

Words came not. Round their souls how deep
The silence seemed to spread!

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

That Nun's hand with its lips to sweep,
Low bent the haughty head;
Nay, more than this; the figure sank
Down, crouching on the floor,
While her bruised spirit healing drank,
It had not known before.

“Sister,” — she said, “I have longed for you
Such weary nights and days!
Through clouds unspeakable, I knew
There must be notes of praise!
This world is but a glancing void,
An arid waste of stone;
Its love and usefulness destroyed
Only for me alone!”

The Sister's gentle eyes looked down
On hers so full of strife;
She might have heard, without a frown,—
The story of her life.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

They clasped, they kissed in wordless prayer,
Holding each other's hand;
And something lay between them there,
None else could understand.

TO CLARICE.

A spirit, formed of light and flame,—
Straight into a dark heart you came.



WHEN first your face I chanced to meet,—
I thought, “How fair it is!—How
sweet!”

But nothing then my eyes could see
Of messages it held,—for me.

Still that face drew me, day by day,
As some fair prospect, far away,—
Seen often, and more near, will send
Its beauty with our lives to blend,—
And linger by us,—to the end.

Yet why say on?—These eyes may trace
Perhaps no more, O gentle face,

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Those lines of beauty and of power
That made thee dearer, hour by hour;—
Perhaps no more into my skies
Shall break the light of those blue eyes,—
Yet may I not their deeps forget,
Till all my earthly suns have set.

A DEATH-BED.

HE sweet winds entered full and free,—
And the last sighs were there ;
Bent o'er the couch the Priest,—to see
If now there might be prayer.—
Flowers blushed within that room, and
threw
Their fragrance on the night ;
In face of Death a vision grew,
Of splendor and delight.
So deep the calm, I seemed to feel
The gentle southern breeze
Ashamed, so swiftly to reveal
Its message from the seas ;—
Dark shadows, changing like a dream,—
Quivered on roof and wall ;

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

And through the casement fell the gleam
Of moonlight over all.

“Daughter,”—he said,—(his voice was calm,
And strangely deep his eyes;—)

“Thy hours are numbered,—life’s last psalm
To-night shall o’er thee rise.

Thy years press round thee, a dark throng
Of tales that have been told;—

Naught boots it, back to look, along
Those buried deeps of old.

* * * * *

His glory has defied our gloom,

He is Himself our Quest,

His pardon has become our doom,—

His Sacred Wounds our Rest.”

“Father,”—she spake,—and, to my thought,
On all she loved so well,—

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Trees, flowers, these winds with odors fraught,
A sudden stillness fell ;—

“Father! But three short years ago

In bitterness malign

Thy dreams no soul on earth could know

So dead, so lost as mine!

Each bright and happy gift would turn

To ashes at my gaze,—

How from such horror patience learn,

How weigh such evil days?—

My life of life was stricken,—its flower

Dead in that Upas air;

One weight lay on me every hour,—

The name of it,—Despair!

“Nay, Father, peace!—I have but spoken

Thus of those vanished days,—

To show what chains Thy touch has broken,

What sighings turned to praise!

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Nor even thy touch alone, for still
Without God's grace, I know
Thou had'st been powerless to fulfill
Thy glorious work below;—
But from that well-remembered eve
When first the thought was mine,
That God's great mercy still could grieve
For *me*, with strength divine,—
I felt my doom depart; beheld
The poison-vapors flee,—
By this great truth to life compelled,—
God had remembered me!

“Should I have lingered on this theme
Father,—so near the end?
And yet,—thou art no passing dream,—
My soul's most constant friend;
Life was a riddle till I saw
Thy hand point out the clue,

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

And knew these words to be Thy law,—
‘Lord!—what for me to do?’—
Thy feet, set in the path to Heaven,
Walk firmly on their way;—
At what a distance mine have striven,
No words can ever say,—
Methinks even eyes like thine might shun
The weight of sins I bear;—
And yet, for me, the deadliest one
Is only,—to despair.”—

* * * * *

They are fled,—the long last shades of night,—
And from these azure skies
Behold, in airy, cloudless night,—
A crystal morn arise!
And Nature lifteth up her psalm
For powers that life restore;
But one still figure, pale and calm,
Shall know them,—nevermore.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

The walls that Earth's despairs have made,
Death's lightnings cleave apart;—
And the white crucifix is laid
On the once burning heart.
One met the Father, knowing what goal
On earth had been her quest;—
Asked him, "How fares it with her soul?"
He said, "She is at rest."

DYING SONG

OF THE ITALIAN SOLDIER AFTER THE BATTLE OF SOLFERINO,
TO HIS ENGLISH FRIEND AND BROTHER-IN-ARMS.

RIEND, friend! I lean upon thee now,
The bitterest pang is past;
And I must die, with martial brow,—
A soldier to the last.

Thy hand still warm in mine; thy tone
Still throbbing in my ears;
Nay, never shed, — my friend, my own,—
These bitter, useless, tears!

What though in all the fire of youth,
I sought my land to save;

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Have I not given her back, in truth, —
The very life she gave?
Thou mourn'st that thus my course should end,
That on this field I lie;
Yet say, O loved and constant friend,
How could I worthier die?

Two pictures rise before me now;
Pictures distinct and clear;
Thou, looking with me, canst avow,
Which brightest shall appear.
One, — of that life we long to keep, —
That chain we love to bear;
The length of days that onward sweep,
To land us in despair!

Nay, start not, — look. Myself I see
Bowed down, and old, and gray,
All manhood's powers and graces free,
Forever passed away.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

My friends departed ; strange and dumb
Thy memory in the past ;
Or, bitterer still, — our love become
But hate and scorn at last !

No, no, thank Heaven, this cannot be !
For me that doom is o'er ;
I, on Life's treacherous, raging sea,
Shall struggle now no more. —
But watch the other scene ! Behold,
Serene, and still, and bright,
I see the heavenly scroll unrolled,
The morning still the night !

I see my name, — if soon forgot,
Untouched by shame or woe ; —
My maiden shield without a blot,
My death before the foe !
I see beside me, — boon more dear
Than aught my dreams could crave,

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Thy love,—a love to reign, to cheer,
To stir beyond the grave!

Thy hand once more! My sight is dim,
But I can clasp it yet;
The darkness round me seems to swim,—
Or are my lashes wet?
One word,—the last! Friend, first and best,
The end draws swifter nigh;
But thus, upon thy faithful breast,
It is not hard to die!

THE NUN.



T was a Nun, who in her cell
Sat quiet, and alone;
But for the beads she had to tell,
Her lips were carven stone;
What could it be,—the unuttered spell
That o'er her past was thrown? —

Dark, as she sat, above her grew
The shadows on the wall;
There was the “mattress-grave,”—and there
Her upward glances fall
Upon her Maker's tortured form,—
The ransom given for all.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

How many years since first this life
Was hers, — that spell serene
Cast o'er her thoughts, her looks, her words
That dead, regardless mien?
Could it be ever that she knew
A woman's passions keen? —

There is scarce a shadow on her brow;
The shade that on her lies,
Comes from a soul that once would know
All life with sweet surprise;
Now, withered, soiled, — could that be fair,
Yea, even to angel eyes!

God! Thou hast made the dumb to speak,
The unhoping blind to see;
From one drop of Earth's suffering cup,
Released Thou would'st not be; —
This life is full of mysteries
That none shall know but Thee.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

This woman, when I think upon
Any life through the years
That might have been, that might be hers,
With springing hopes and fears, —
And now, — this open sepulchre,
Where even there fall not tears!

My God, my God! That name is Thine;
Thou, — makest not afraid;
Through bitterest valleys when we go
There might be darker shade;
Thou hatest, saith Thy mystic Word,
Nothing that Thou hast made.

My thoughts go back upon the Nun; —
I feel that she must know
God's love for her as sweet, as true, —
As for aught else below;
She waits for the other life to see
Why this was ever so.

TERESA OF AVILA

BEFORE HER CRUCIFIX.



IN the Saint's face so softly lies
The blessedness of prayer,—
So firmly seek the Saint's sweet eyes,
Her sacred symbol there,—
We deem no powers of mortal worth
Might tempt her thoughts to roam,
And the pure soul, even while on earth,
Half lifted to its home.

Yet think not this. She,—gentle, true,
Noble, beloved and brave,—
Herself life's sharpest conflicts knew,
Herself could vainly crave;—
For twenty years she might not pray,—
Her thoughts o'erwent control;—

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

But God, Who cast it, took away
This shadow from her soul.

And then,—when strife was o'er, and she
A conqueror in the light,—
How yearned her generous heart to free
Others from deeper night!—
In life she knew no single hour
This wish did not command ;
Her influence spread,—a holy power,—
Afar throughout the land.

* * * * *

They asked her once,—of those, whose lot
Was never Heaven to know,—
What was their worst chastisement,—what
Their one distinctive woe?—
They waited then, her words to greet ;—
Lifting deep eyes above,—
She answered only, calm and sweet,—
“Alas! They do not love.”

AN ORIENTAL SALUTATION.

“PEACE BE WITH YOU.”



PEACE be with you!—Peace at night,
In the obscure and solemn light;
Peace at morn, when, softly gay,
Those fair eyes open to the day;
Peace, while earth's light is round thee;
 peace
Beyond thy dreams when earth shall cease;—
Peace forever! But for me,
What peace is there,—save with thee?

C

AMINE.



HERE dwells she?"—"Seest thou in
the vale

Yon gracious mansion rise,—
Where trees wave slowest to the gale,
And sweetest sunshine lies?

"The vines arch o'er the balcony ;—
The roses bloom beyond ;
The joyous birds, on every tree,—
To Nature's joy respond."

"What is her destiny ? How speeds
For her that shadow, — Life ?
How are fulfilled the immortal needs ?—
And how is met the strife ?"

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

“ Her husband bears, known far and near,—
 A true and honored name ;
A seaman once ; he would not fear
 A thing on earth but shame.

“ Wealth is his now ; his toils are done ;
 Yet, more than all beside,—
The wife his constancy hath won,
 His treasure and his pride !

“ The very apple of his eye ;
 Stranger !—’tis even so ;—
How a strong man can love, and why,
 Perhaps you may not know.

“ There plays, beside the lady’s knee,
 A boy of fairy grace ;—
In whom, already, you may see
 The fairy mother’s face ! ”

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

“ Is she so fair, then? ” — “ I have seen
O stranger! many lands ; —
Stood on Columbia’s prairies green,
Arabia’s desert-sands ; —

“ And fair ones I have known, who taught
My heart to feel their power ;
Yet never met I, to my thought,
One like this English flower !

“ When I look on her face, meseems
I stand in moonlight pale
Stirless ; — nor can explain the dreams
That o’er my thoughts prevail !

“ So gracious, too ! — There’s not a boor
Her look might chance to meet, —
But for her sake would toil endure, —
Would worship at her feet ! ”

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

“You paint,” — I said, — “a mortal lot
From mortal terrors free ; —
Without a bitterness or blot ;
Almost too bright to be !

“So sweet, so loved, so beautiful !
All brightness round her cast ;
Her cup of bliss must be so full,
It should run o’er at last !”

“Stranger ! I gave thee naught but truth ;
And yet, — if thou should’st spy
In all her beauty and her youth, —
The enchantress pass thee by ;

“To God, thy Father, bend the knee,
And of His mercy crave
For her, as happiest doom, to be
This hour within her grave !”

WE ARE THREE.



E are three,—in love and pride;
Our hearts walk daily side by side.
We are three,—in hope and truth;
Linked by the golden dreams of youth.

We are three,—yet of us, one
Lies far beneath the orient sun,
Where the pale palm-trees bend in pride,
To kiss the earth where warriors died.

We are three,—yet, beneath the wave,
My love lies in a lonely grave,—
The waters flow upon his breast;
He sleeps in everlasting rest.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Those two are dead, — I yet remain
Within this world of toil and pain,—
Yet wheresoe'er my footsteps flee,
I bear this token, — We are three.

We are three, — our love is more,
Our hearts are stronger than of yore.
Though their loved forms I cannot see,—
We are together, — we are three.

I wait, — my life is dim and still;
My worn-out heart no more can thrill; —
I wait for Death, my soul to free,—
Yet even here we still are three.

O strange, sweet power! what dreams can reign
Like these so far from mortal pain? —
What hope, what glory can I see,
Fair as the sign, — that we are three?

THE VOYAGE OF THE PETREL.

(TO CLARICE.)

I will permit the reader to picture me for the next eight years, as a bark slumbering through halcyon weather, in a harbor still as glass, — the steersman stretched on the little deck, his face up to Heaven, his eyes closed; buried, if you will, in a long prayer.

However, it cannot be concealed that in that case I must somehow have fallen overboard, or that there must have been wreck at last. I too well remember a time, — a long time of cold, of danger, of contention.

I even know there was a storm, and that not of one hour or one day. For many days and nights, neither sun nor stars appeared; we cast with our own hands the tackling out of the ship; a heavy tempest lay on us; all hope that we should be saved was taken away. In fine, the ship was lost, the crew perished.

VILLETTE, Chap 4.



AIR friend, whose softest eyes, intent,—

Such witchery o'er me cast,—

Thou ask'st me then,—how I have spent

Those days of absence,—past?

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Those eyes,—I *shall* not let them keep
My actual presence nigh;
Nor, with their radiant rangings, sweep
The cold reality;

Yet,—such their mercy and their power,—
Half would I let them know
This history, in some deepest hour
Of love for all below.

* * * * *

Take up the riddle of my life;
Where thy resemblance shone
With all sweet hopes and meanings rife
See vacancy alone.

Bound to some port I needs must be;
It matters little where;
Behold me, then, on a calm sea,—
Whose waters are despair.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Yet nought affects it this, that I,
Serene, perhaps, and bland,—
Should watch my vessel quietly
Leave out of sight the land;

Like Egypt's love, I may recline
On couches soft and deep,—
And breathe the happiest airs divine,—
In simulated sleep;

Or list the deep-voiced sailors' song,
While rough but faithful hands
Prepare my ship for voyage long,
Among the unknown lands.

Not even a cloudlet floats, to speck
The blue and dreamy air;
The steersman lies upon the deck,—
Buried, perhaps, in prayer.—

* * * * *

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

This Lethean quiet!—must it cease?
Balm for the heart opprest?
Ah!—is it, then, a conquered peace,—
Or but deceitful rest?

Fast drew that season to its close;—
As, by some careless word,—
Dropped suddenly from its repose,—
We know the heart is stirred;

So, when I heard a dreary sound
Low muttering far away,—
I knew the tempest was unbound,—
Ready to meet its prey.

I knew,—I shuddered.—With earth's woe
Must earth's frail hearts despond;
What will be, will be; this we know;
Why seek to pierce beyond?

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

I waited, reckless half, in thought,—
If that sea were my grave;
Waited,—while rising, round me wrought
The powers of wind and wave.

Strange deeps in Life, in Nature, form
Before the expectant eye;
Not for one hour, nor day, that storm
Might rave beneath that sky.

Nothing foreboded lip to lip;
Even closer human bands;
There were firm hearts within that ship
And strong and faithful hands.

Yet, to my thought, it seemed to be
In that drear dark unknown
When th' others drew so close, for me
Marked out to stand alone.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

I cried unto the winds and waves;
Methought, their sole reply
Was but to rear their green sea-caves
Against the stormy sky.

All elements in earth or heaven,
Seemed in that hour to meet;
I saw, even from that ruptured levell,
Fall on us radiance sweet.

It was a mystery all, I knew;
But,—mystery not in vain;—
These words came ever to my view,
“Joy in the heart of pain.”

Ah me, such thoughts how vain, how weak,—
Before that ruthless sky,—
Whose myriad voices seemed to speak,—
“You are drifting on to die!”

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Even that last crash, when all was o'er, —
The sunken rocks our goal, —
Seemed but a whispering sound, before
The anguish of my soul.

* * * * *

I speak and live. How is it, then,
I have not looked my last
On earth and sky, and fields and men,
With that experience past?

The young, the loved, the happy,—caught
To worlds we dare not sound;
How is it such as I was brought
Out of the deeps profound?

I, at the least, O Lord, can say
To Thee, who gav'st me breath,—
Shadow or sunshine, I could pray
Never for life,—but death.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

This story of my voyage is true ;
To all who prosper, known.
In fine, the ship was lost, the crew
Perished, save I alone.

LINES

SUGGESTED BY THE TWO STONE FIGURES AT THE NORTH
ENTRANCE OF ROUEN CATHEDRAL. (PORTAIL
DES LIRRAIRES,) SEPTEMBER 24TH, 1871.



OR ages they have dwelt in stone,
Two mystic figures fair;—
For ages, passers-by have known
A fragrance, — as of prayer.
How long some tender chisel wrought
To leave those forms of peace!
Even yet, the sculptor's pious thought
Its working shall not cease.

* * * * *

Girt round by all the city's din,
The brave Cathedral stands;
A spark of fire, those deeps within
Dropt down from Heavenly hands;

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

It flings the splendor of a dream
Upon the unworthy street;
And on its strength all forms supreme
All holiest symbols meet.

Yet men, in every beauty, see
The one, last touch divine;—
And for each heart there seems to be
Some special-lighted shrine.—
Thus, in no other outward nook
So was my spirit bowed,—
As where these figures seemed to look
Upon the passing crowd.

They were so sweet!—as they had come
Borne soft through midnight air
To bring some soul, oppressed and dumb,—
The vision of a prayer;
Which, in that sudden light set free,—
He, who such waiting bore,—

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Had, after, fixed in stone,—to be
An offering evermore.

They are so stern!—because they know
No faintest link with sin;
Soft figures, fleeing all below
The Heavenly grace to win;
And, to my thought, the haloes true
That ever round them came,—
Turned each heart-outward, to our view,—
How different,—yet the same!

Clad in monk's robe and cowl is one;
Down-bent the waiting eyes;
His hands are crossed; his eyes upon
The earth, not in the skies.
Yet,—patient traveler in this clime,
Loving and loved in strife,—
How far beyond these shades of time
Is lived his truest life!

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

His is a spirit, — sad, yet true ;
Feeling its weight of sin ; —
Ordnained, that very anguish through,
Pardon and peace to win, —
But yet, — the Shadow. — For the light
In radiant angel guise, —
His comrade stands, with eyes of might, —
Uplifted to the skies !

Uplifted ! — Not a touch of fear
Dwells on that star-like brow ; —
If sorrow dimmed those features here, —
The stains are vanished now.
How merciful the thought, to abide
Through years of sinful breath,
In homes that *might* be glorified
Thus by the hand of death !

Two products are they, of one root, —
These loving figures fair ;

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Type of the seed and of the fruit, —
Earthly and Heavenly prayer.
One without other might not be;
Though every cloud should burst
To shew us light's intensity, —
We need the shadow first.

Many and marvellous years have flown
Since hands, so skilled and blest, —
To shape these angel thoughts in stone, —
Have crossed themselves in rest; —
The sculptor's soul might seek in vain
His world of hopes and fears; —
But yet, — his message shall remain, —
And speak through all the years.

MALA PROHIBITA,—MALA IN SE.

Flesh lies around us, everywhere;
God help us in our heart's despair.

 I WALKED within a smiling land;
The mountains stood on either hand,
Strife with their peace to overwhelm;
Fair guardians of a fairer realm.

They drew their outlines, soft and high,
Against the pureness of the sky;
Their height, their distance, grew to me
Ideals of mystic liberty.

Valleys and streamlets at their feet
Made the fair picture all complete,
And my soul quieted its sighs
To gaze upon their destinies.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

I walked with pleasant comrades there ;
The mountains towered divinely fair, —
The air was balm ; — there came to me
A sense of utter misery.
Their talk, — what was it ? — Heart, o'erthrow
Fair visions of the long ago, —
Accept the emptiness of days
That know not yearning, power, or praise, —
Even then thou wilt, — not glad, — behold
The shutting of the gates of gold, —
The poisoning of the radiant thought
That mean all meanings Life has wrought, —
The words of course, that like rough seas, —
Bring shadows o'er God's silences !

But He remembered ! — I could see, —
When other noontides rose for me.

I walked, then, with a little child ;
His face, his spirit, undefiled ;

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

His fancies ranging, wide and true, —
As those far hills beyond his view, —
His soft, small brain in quietness
Gathering all powers that yet should bless.
He dwelt not with the things of time, —
But of the Eternities sublime, —
And Life's Medusa-horrors fell
Before that gentle spectacle.

“A little child shall lead them!” True;
O my sad heart, was this for *you*?

FATE AND FREE-WILL.

My heart so beat, I flew so fast,—
This cannot be "Too late!" at last.



HEY said that she was dying; though
How true the tale I could not know.
Such life as dwelt in her, by right,—
Could death put, instant, out of sight?

How many years we spent apart!
How old this aching at my heart!

That morn we met! I know it well;
How fair the early sunlight fell
On lawn and terrace, lifted brave
High o'er the sleeping azure wave!
Behind, the stately mansion rose;
Its secrets locked in grim repose.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

How bloomed, those peaceful morning hours,
In sheltered balcony the flowers !

How, like all dazzling gems in one, —
Glittered that sea beneath the sun !

How airs, that might have vexed the day, —
In softest distance died away !

How hints would come, in pausing note, —
Of sea-girt mariners afloat !

How zephyrs, from some far-off shore
Would round them nameless fragrance pour !

How sent the bird, unfaltering, there
His song into the upper air !

How earth and sky, and wave and beam
Made all the world one fairy dream, —

With hope, youth, joy, enchantment rife ;
Might I not feel in love with life ?

Ah, yes ! I joyed in Nature's lore ;
But knew, — there wanted something more.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

That came. — A figure passed me by, —
As, leaning from the balcony, —
Seaward I looked. — A figure slight, —
With unheard step, and eyes of might.
Though fixed and far my gaze was bent,
I knew that something came and went.
Retracing swift her noiseless ways, —
I turned; the sunlight drooped to haze, —
And our eyes met, — in a long gaze.

A long, long gaze! The first is past; —
There must be thousands ere the last!

Describe her! — Words, thus coldly dealt, —
To paint what is not seen, but felt!
Or, — could a painter fix the dyes
That hover betwixt earth and skies?

She was my focus; in one blaze
Drew all my scattered spirit-rays.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Life dwelt within her ; life so keen
And quick, nought else could intervene.
She with you, breathing earthly breath,—
There was no room for thoughts of death!—

One moment I describe, — retrace ; —
Upon the darkness paint her face !

A brow broad, generous, gentle, — eyes
More softly blue than summer skies, —
Which held so much within those deeps
Where, in its home, the spirit sleeps, —
That this strange thought at times I knew, —
Those eyes, — were they a dream, or true ?
Yet, fancying thus, I need but turn
Where, in their love, could lightings burn, —
Or, — where each curve and line was grace, —
Look on that sparkling, fairy face, —
Or list those tones so rich, so sweet, —

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

That made Life's music all complete,—
To crush self-torments in their birth,—
To know her woman of the earth!
Those eyes,—they must be true, for me,—
So much I needed them,—and thee!

She of my life was star, was queen;
But ah, what shadows rushed between!

There were long years,—I breathed, I felt;—
At times this darkness seemed to melt,—
And through its dying mists of strife,
Show me a glory as of Life.
But even as I beheld, and knew
All else was false, this only true,—
The light would fall, the peace be o'er,—
Life's poison hold my life once more.

Past all.—Only by God's sweet grace
Now can I meet thee,—face to face.

THE ROOTS OF LIFE.



HY fair, new chamber, love, I see,—
So bright, I had not known;
But, in it, thou hast left for me
This crucifix alone.

And by that sign I recognize
That sacred symbol still,—
Thou art mine own beneath the skies,—
In happiness or ill.

At times the shadow of thy doom
Falls o'er a smiling land;
None reach thee in thy living tomb,—
For none can understand.

And then a weight, men call despair,—
Tightens and stops thy breath;

STUDIES OF POEMS.

And then,—God's crystal azure there
Fades to a mask of death.

And then, love,—I have seen thee lie
With dust upon thy head,—
A ghost beneath the peaceful sky,—
And than the dead more dead.

But is it that *thy* soul could be
Spurned thus from Love divine?—
Beyond this darkness could I see
No glorious future shine?

Ah, Love!—the death-in-life we meet,
To death itself might blind.
Ah, Love!—can any words be sweet
When Love is not behind?—

Those days are passed for thee, and now
Thou walkest in the light;

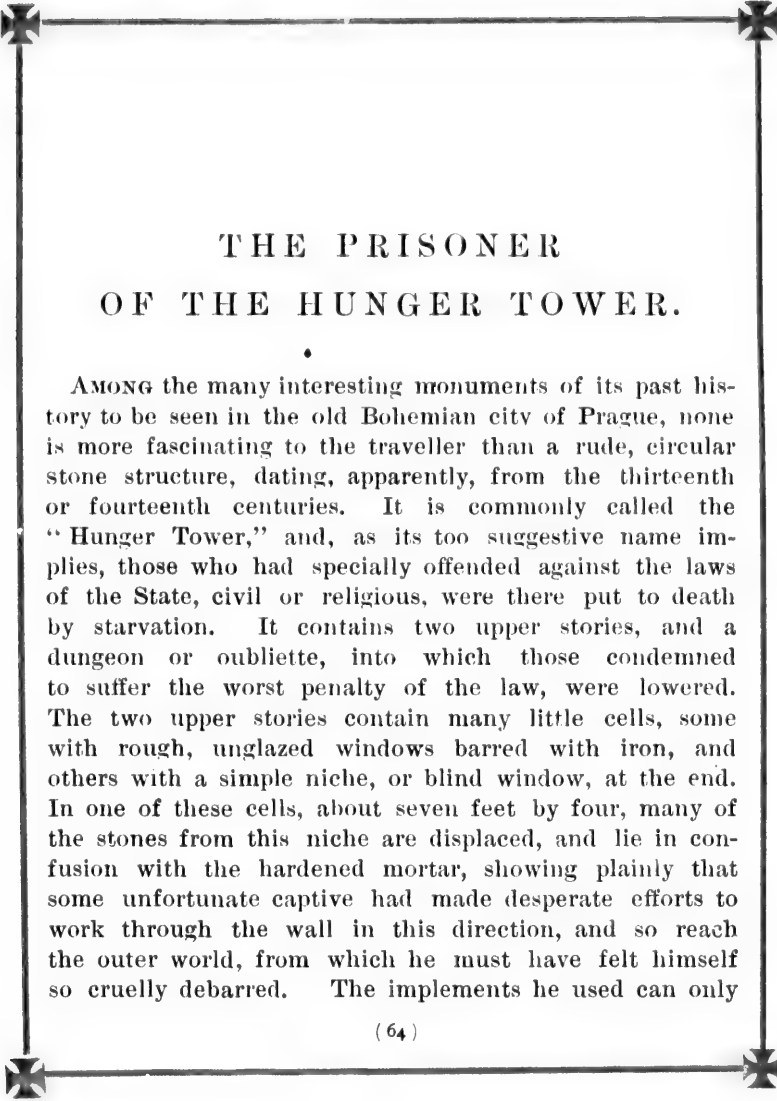
STUDIES FOR POEMS.

God left upon thy glorious brow
No scars to tell of fight.

Only,—thou hast, at times, a gaze,
His chosen ones must wear,—
Telling, for those who look, of days
Saved in the deeps of prayer.

But here thou art, and in thy hand
My own,—the strife is o'er;—
And the sweet crucifix must stand
Between us, evermore.

And words like these seem hovering near,—
By wrath and tempest nursed;
“Love thou thy God, and *dare* not fear,—
Because He loved thee first.”



THE PRISONER OF THE HUNGER TOWER.

•

AMONG the many interesting monuments of its past history to be seen in the old Bohemian city of Prague, none is more fascinating to the traveller than a rude, circular stone structure, dating, apparently, from the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries. It is commonly called the "Hunger Tower," and, as its too suggestive name implies, those who had specially offended against the laws of the State, civil or religious, were there put to death by starvation. It contains two upper stories, and a dungeon or oubliette, into which those condemned to suffer the worst penalty of the law, were lowered. The two upper stories contain many little cells, some with rough, unglazed windows barred with iron, and others with a simple niche, or blind window, at the end. In one of these cells, about seven feet by four, many of the stones from this niche are displaced, and lie in confusion with the hardened mortar, showing plainly that some unfortunate captive had made desperate efforts to work through the wall in this direction, and so reach the outer world, from which he must have felt himself so cruelly debarred. The implements he used can only

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

be conjectured. The old cicerone, on being asked what was done with him for thus attempting to escape, shrugged her shoulders and answered indifferently, "Oh, taken out and shot next day."



E stood within his narrow cell, —

So narrow, loathsome, dim, —

Was there a God? — and could these
cries, —

His creature's, reach to Him? —

He looked into his heart; 'twas nought
But bitter to the brim.

"I know," he thought, "this morn of June, —

Outside, the lindens play;

The love-birds sing their madrigals, —

Soaring from earth away;

The glorious sun looks down from heaven

Serene, upon the day."

"My God!" he said; not that he thought

There could be such a one, —

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

But that such words break from the lips, —
When man is most undone, —
Even by such instinct as the flowers
Turn with to seek the sun.

He said no more. — Goes ever aught
So deep as earth's despair, —
Save those two living, dying words, —
The briefest, longest prayer?
My God! — if we believe, He is, —
Enough; our life is there.

As in some torpid trance of shame, —
Slow went the creeping days;
Sometimes the sunlight burnt to flame, —
Sometimes it sank to haze; —
It was the same to him; his eyes
On stone and darkness gaze.

One night, — it was a night when storm
And wind were on the blast, —

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

His hands, cold lying on the stone,
O'er which so oft they passed, —
Shrunk, as they clutched a nail; he felt
A flash of joy at last!

He grasped it firm. — “In days of old, —
Now dead as leaves that fall, —
Earth's pomps and gauds were mine; those
powers

Whose worth we dare not call;
And now, — this rusty nail shall bear
The palm before them all!”

He groped to the blind niche, that turned
Towards the outer air;

His hands were strung with steel; he lost
A moment, his despair;
And, in that moment, o'er him came
A thought, — that was a prayer.

He worked, he toiled. The drops would stand
Like beads upon his brow;

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

The tissues of that hapless frame
Such unused toil would bow ;
What mattered it? — his breath came free, —
He had an interest now !

Once, tired, he leaned against the wall ;
It was a summer night ;
(Nought guessing how he might have come
From darkness near to light ;)
The measured sound of church bells came
Piercing that stony might !

Was it he who heard? The hands fell free, —
The heart forgot its fears ;
He, in that moment, tenderly
Recalled his vanished years ;
And, as he listened, could it be?
This, — that he felt, — was tears.

“I have walked,” he said, “in such a blur
Of horror and of pain,

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

I wonder not the bitterness
Has gone into my brain;
I deemed not God could so be God,—
To give such hour again!”

He listened to that music still,
With thoughts so sweet and strange!
Upon the breathless dungeon air,—
There passed a sudden change;
Whence came these sounds?—and whence
these eyes
That o’er him seemed to range?

They noted all; the rusty nail
Fallen down upon the floor;
The misplaced stones, that told the tale
Of hope revived once more;
The prisoner’s face, though wan and pale,—
Lit by the dreams of yore!

Each noted, with triumphal brow;
For him the die was cast;

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

This life of all mysterious woe ;
Foreknew its conflicts passed.
His days were justly forfeit now
To the outraged laws at last !

“Prisoner,” the eldest said, “you were pent
Here in this narrow room ;
Men well had deemed you penitent, —
Hid in such dungeon gloom ;
Now mercy pleads in vain ; you are sent
To-morrow to your doom !”

The door clanged close — The mournful eyes, —
Dazed by that cruel light, —
Fell back upon their destinies, —
The shadow and the night ;
And yet, — and yet, — not quite the same ;—
They had known at last their might !
A shiver rustled through his frame ;
A shiver, — not of fear ;

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

His eyes were fixed, yet one might see
Their vision soft and clear;
And yet,—he crouched upon the ground,—
As though some foe were near.

Was it so to end,—the agony
Of that most bitter breath,—
The dreams, the aspirings, that would see
How slow Hope perisheth,—
Then the after quiet, that must be
At last,—the spirit's death?

Earth's battles are forever so
Through all conflicting powers;
Soil must be tortured ere it show
The summer fruits and flowers;
No eye but God's could ever know
Of his last earthly hours.

The morn is here!—In sullen file
The guards before the gate

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Are gathered; then, a little while
Below the lindens wait;—
And then,—they enter, and they stand
To bear him to his fate.

He is led forth!—How does he look,—
O men, of women born?
Fiends might their lesson take from you,—
Of cruelty and scorn,—
Yet,—he has little left to bear
Upon this summer morn.

Still in the court-yard stands a tree,
Lopped, dreary and aghast;
Stands where that prisoner, gagged and bound,
Before the axe was cast,—
Where, in God's gentle sunshine, he
From night to morning passed!

This happ'd,—how many years ago?
That know not I, nor care;

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

His dungeon stands, to witness still;

The stones all broken there;

Is it so strange, is it so new,—

That life should be despair?

In the other world at last, O God!

When light shall vanquish gloom,—

Can we not, in some moment, know

The mystery of his doom,—

And how far Thou permitt'st the shades

Of death beyond the tomb?

THE MYSTICAL LAND.



HOW do I go, my Heart, when I go
Into the Mystical Land?"

"Thou sittest by a river slow,
That flows into the sand,—
Thou watchest, far above, the skies
In gold and crystal gleam,—
Earth's fiercest roar about thee dies,—
Thou walkest in a dream.
For not one moment canst thou know
The bitterness, the strife,
The whirl of waters that below
Make up what we call Life;
If faintest thought, if slightest sound
Of earth thy spirit stain,—
Then leav'st thou, for that dreary round,
The Mystic Land again!"

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

“What do I do, my Heart, when I go
Into the Mystical Land?” •

“This is thy doing there, — to know
That thou dost understand
That life is love, and love is life,
And the Love of Love is there, —
There is an end to thoughts of strife, —
To the poison of despair;
The night of sorrow ends; for this
Thou knewest could not last;
Thou find'st, in very truth, thy bliss
Is more for what is past. —
Such draughts of peace thou drinkest there,
That like a river flow, —
Thou art thankful for the old despair;
What is there more to know?”

“Can it ever be, this side the grave,
My Heart, — the Mystic land?”

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

So tenderly she answered me, —
And I felt her understand;

“Is, then, this earth one pleasure-ground,
All dazzling to the sight, —
Where only happiness is found, —
Morning, and noon, and night?
Are there no thoughts of anguish drear,
No lead within the breast, —
No passion, that must die of fear, —
Before its own unrest?
Thou knewest that question came in vain,”
Thus said my Heart to me;
“We are sent into this world, to gain
The next through agony.”

“Ah me, what shudderings then, my Heart,
To reach the Mystic Land!
I could almost yield my little part, —
I cannot understand!”

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

“It is not meant that eyes should see
Clear in this bitter place;
When it is vanished, they may be
Serene and face to face.
If He, the Captain of our war,—
Conquered through suffering all,—
How should'st thou dread to look afar,—
Hearing His trumpet-call?
Be patient through the agony
Thou canst not understand;
In thy Lord's smile, shall smile for thee
At last,—the Mystic Land!”

IN MILAN CATHEDRAL.

(APRIL, 1871.)



WANDERER, pausing at the door, —
Doubting of things divine, —
The wearier thou of life, — the more
All this domain is thine.
For thee, upon that altar high, —
The symbol-splendours blaze ;
Upwards, with clouds of incense, fly
Yearnings that fill thy days ;
For thee maintains each column proud
The worship of the years ;
For thee the lofty arch is bowed, —
As even with mortal fears ;
For thee, O stricken, cowering heir
Of bliss and love untold, —
Visions thy weakness scarce can bear, —
Immortal deeps unfold !

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Enter.—The depths of music fill
These echoing spaces fair;
Thy heart can only beat to thrill;—
Thy silence turns to prayer.
The air of death that girds around
Thy spirit and thy life,—
Sinks from thee on this blessed ground,—
With holy victories rife;
Thy heart, beyond its longings weak,—
Has, for the moment, flown;
Earth's bitter voices cannot speak
Where Heaven's is heard alone.
Thou think'st that God has left thee; know'st
No world but thy despair;—
If, to its very deeps thou throw'st
Thy look, then,—He is there!*

* The Rev. F. W. Faber's idea was, that in the very depths of mortal agony, if we looked for God around or outside of us, we could not find Him; that in turning back upon our own hearts, we found Him there.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

O worlds that from the soul can sweep
The sickening of its pain!—
O worlds that hold such cordials deep
For heart and blood and brain!
Worlds that in giving death to pride,—
Uplift us to the sky;
Worlds that beneath this roof abide,—
Within these cloisters lie, —
Worlds whose spells waft us to His
throne, —
The Lord of Heavenly powers, —
Who for our sakes made death His own, —
That so might life be ours;
Most merciful! where'er they roam, —
These souls which Thou hast made, —
Here must they breathe the air of home,
Here Earth's proud waves be stayed.

THE GRAVE OF FENICE.



HE rests, then!—Solemn be that rest,—
After life's fever, sleep!



That heart, with passionate hopes
oppressed,

With longings strange and deep, —
Has found its quiet. O'er her, here, —
How soft the grasses wave!

O stranger! Bring thy hope, thy fear, —
Not unto this fair grave!

She who rests here, — I cannot see

One touch of nature fled!

Ever, in lingering thought, to me, —

She lives, — she is not dead!

It is as though, by some strange chance, —

Wandering, with spirit sore, —

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

I might behold that upward glance,—
Fenice! mine once more!

Sixteen. Those years when some have told,—
They are but children still;
Life's deeps, as yet, may not unfold,—
The slumbering heart to thrill;
But she,—when dropt God's sudden call
Into her youthful sky,—
It was as she had known the All
And now,—could only die!

The All! But she had known a youth,—
Rich with imperial hours;
Steeped in a natural girlish truth,—
Balmy with breath of flowers;
Life said, in accents that seemed true,—
“My child! I give thee days
To wind, 'neath skies of deepest blue,—
Only in radiant ways.”

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

She listened, she believed; her ear
 Could but such promise greet;
Nor might a thought intrude, of fear,
 Beside its music sweet;
She walked, as reading a fair tale,
 Down some enchanted land:
Sudden the brilliance seemed to fail,—
 The book fell from her hand!

And she beheld, where Fancy drew
 Arcades of glorious bloom,—
That, through a mist, her pathway grew
 A pathway to the tomb!
That gentle spirit, warmed and cheered
 By all it met below,
Was doomed. What then she felt, or feared,
 I do not seek to know.

But this I know,—that here, serene,—
 Safe from the world's cold breath,—

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

My fair Fenice lies, a queen,—
Sleeping the sleep of death!
The pale hands crossed;— I know, even yet,
In thought, their touch benign;
And closed the eyes, which never met
With aught but sweetness, mine!

We were together once, in truth;
Our souls together; still
Those so departed days of youth
Come back, one heart to thrill;
But now,—a wanderer I must be,—
Bound on some wayward quest,—
While, set so far apart from me,
She lies in holy rest.

ELMIRE'S PORTRAIT.



HER eyes were deep, her face serene:
The presence of a crownèd queen
Was hers; with every word she spake
A beauty over life would break.

No meaner thoughts could live, that you
Once brought before that earnest view;
Despair was not, beneath the skies,—
When you had looked into her eyes.
The petty things, the common ways,
That fill so much of all our days,—
Were not the same, methinks, to her;—
The pulses of her life would stir
With larger meanings, loftier powers;
Her soul stood nearer home than ours.
The strength one mortal life may hold,—
Can it by word or pen, be told?

CHURCH BELLS IN VENICE.

(SANTA ZACARIA.)



HEY steal me back to other days, —
They smooth to youth my brow ;
As through Venetian air I gaze, —
They flood the landscape now.

They lift the struggling spirit high,
Out of its pains and woe,
And set it near some cloudless sky, —
As in the long ago ;

They praise, entreat, complain, adore, —
They soothe and they awake, —
Sound-waves that strike some holier shore,
And the soul's silence break, —

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Earth's self-reproach and penitence
Seems uttered in their tone;
Clouds gather round their heights intense.
To mortal eyes unknown.

Yet still those echoes, rising true, —
Earth's deadlier vapors part, —
And in the space they leave, we view
All, that should fill the heart.

TO A FRIEND.



WHEN first I met your glance, my
friend,

Some instinct seemed to speak, —
And murmur, “Here life’s quest may
end;

Behold the heart you seek!

“Long, long the watch, the waiting; long
The hope, the fell despair; —
A Presence rises from the throng,
The answer to thy prayer!

“Now drop the burden of thy fears,
Thy sorrows put away;
The light that in thy East appears
Shines to the perfect day.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

“For thee no more the bitter gloom, —
The threatenings of the past;
Thy spirit, ransomed from its tomb,
’Scapes to its life at last!”

* * * * *

What was thy charm? Not till this hour
Could earthly spell command,
For me the witchery and the power
Held in thy careless hand!

Was it, that in some vanished year,
— Lost, lost in mists of yore, —
Thy soul was part of mine, — and here
Reclaimed its own once more?

I know not. Friend, thou may’st not see
(Thou should’st not, — it is best,)
All thy affection is to me,
My refuge and my rest!

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

The clouds may lower around, and dart
The lightnings on the gale ;
But, — still thine image in my heart, —
On ! on ! I will not quail !

A FIRST VIEW OF QUEBEC.



RIGHT in the morning fair,
Bright through the summer air,
Gilded with sunshine rare,
Quebec was seen.

Floated and curled in light
The crested wavelets bright,
Around her guardian might —
The Fortress-Queen !

I knew her — far away,
Before we reached the bay,
Mine eyes could mark the sway
Of rampart-towers ;
Before her walls I knew,
Some instinct told me true
How near I was to view
Those ancient powers !

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Near—nearer yet we came,
Rose dark her heights of fame
Against that field of flame,
The morning sky;
Frowned down embrasures deep,—
Gleamed cannon on the steep,—
Flew stern above her keep
One flag on high!

Nor for the eye alone
These radiant pictures shone;
The lore of cycles flown
Seemed garnered here;
The Present and the Past
Together smiled at last—
Spells round these walls were cast
That yet are near!

* * * *

Dark years have rushed between
Me and that radiant scene,—

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Old memories quick and keen,
Are quenched in night;
Yet, with hope's wakening thrill,
Before my vision still
That city on the hill
Arises bright!

Let but a stranger's praise
And long remembrance, raise
Some sign upon the ways, —
At least, — 'tis true;
And stand thou firm in power,
Braced for the darkest hour —
May none around thee lower!
Quebec, — adieu!

TWO SPRINGS.



AST Spring, when early on us fell
A blissful, sunlit day —
When Winter's ear might trace the
knell
Foretelling his decay,

I, — all my heart borne down with woe, —
Swift to thy dwelling sped,
If haply from thy lips might flow
Some comfort for my dread.

I found thee in thy chamber fair
Girt round with leaves and flowers;
I might have thought my footsteps there
Strayed in a fairy's bowers.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

I heard thy gentle lips renew
The hopes of earlier years;
How swift those happy moments flew,
That woke me from my fears!

And yet, *THY* life was dark — no more
Its vanished suns could shine;
How, my heart shamed itself before
The sweet content of thine!

I went — and with thy parting smile
Some fancy whispered free,
“Ah, how our friendship shall beguile
The shades of Springs to be!”

* * * * *

Once more the Spring looks down in light
On forest, mount and plain;
Borne on victorious sunbeams bright
Her love is ours again.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

And yet, — as to thy chamber sweet

My thoughts were wont to stray, —
Now, if that memory loved they meet,
They shrink, and turn away.

And, where my steps would turn to thee,
And linger at thy door,
They — while I own mortality, —
Shall linger — nevermore !

I pictured for thee Spring-times true
Of earthly light and love ;
Even while I hoped, thy spirit knew
Eternal Spring above !

IN AUTUMN.



Y walks lie now among the leaves,
Crimson, and gold, and brown;—
For Nature her sweet broidery weaves
O'er all the dreary town.

Slow wandering, in some nook I stand,
And linger—while the grace
Now spreading broadcast o'er the land,
Shines “in a shady place!”

The mountain from these slopes is seen
A rainbowed, dazzling height,
As if the summer's sombre green
Had lost itself in light.

And still no glare upon the sky,—
But softest, dreamiest rays

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Look down through mists to sanctify
These mellow Autumn days!

Yet never did fair scene but bring
Some thoughts that were not fair;
The shadow of a phantom wing
Forever in the air!

Why—when these Autumn leaflets fall,
So coldly and so sere,—
Should they those vanished hours recall,
Made by thy presence dear?

Ah! friend!—Those memories bring to me
Not bliss so much as pain;
The burden of my thought must be,
When shall we meet again?

A CHRISTMAS SONG.



GAIN! the skies are chilling now;
The snow is on the ground;
Winter, with sullen, old-time brow,
Looks haughtily around.
But faces gay, and hearts as light
As sunbeams, tell at last
We dare to hope for something bright
Before the year, is past!

Upon these days the sunlight gleams
More peaceful and more fair;
Can it be fancy? but there seems
A fragrance in the air;
That subtle brightness quivers through
Skies gray with winter's cold;

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

That fragrance,— 'tis the same we knew
On many a morn of old !

Conflicts may o'er our souls have passed,
So deadly and so deep,
That, while we live, the shadows cast
Will haunt us as we sleep ;
A light may from our hearts have gone
That nothing can restore ;—
But, all the same, life passes on
With joy to thousands more !

Now — well-remembered pictures crowd
Where'er we turn our eyes :
Upon bleak fields the snowy shroud,
Direct from Heaven, lies ;
And there is peace on all around,
As in the ancient days ;
And, ever rising from the ground,
The wealth of prayer and praise !

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Oh ! might we but, in sweet content,
Accept the mighty will !
Thanks, Lord, for all Thy mercies sent
To erring mortals still ;
So constant, all our lives we knew
Their brightness round us cast ;
So many, undeserved and true,
We dare not count at last !

THE CHOICE.

"It is better to be sitting than standing, better lying down than sitting, dead than lying down."

EASTERN PROVERB.



WERE well, methinks, at freshening
dawn,

(Within thy heart its lightness,)
To stand, and watch, upon the lawn,
The land aflame with brightness;
To trace, upon his upward way,
The lark at distance flying;
So standing, to forget the day,—
The strife around thee lying.

Better to sit! as it might be,
That half-lit thought divining,

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Couches, of quaintest broidery,
Await but thy reclining.
If in its loneliness the scene
Thy drooping thought abashes,
Beside thee may some loved one lean,
While the warm fire-light flashes.

Better to lie! The curtains drawn,
The bed all quiet—lonely;
While thou, upon it, waitest dawn,—
Dreading its brightness only.
Still in thy heart is Passion's throne;
New hopes are round thee starting;—
Though from thee—to thyself unknown,
The ancient life is parting.

Best to be dead!—Thus liest thou now:
No more a pilgrim, weeping;
The haven reached,—upon thy brow
At last a peace is sleeping.—

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Thy struggles — they are past and gone ;
 Their shade no longer o'er thee ;
Thou wak'st — to find another dawn, —
 Another life before thee.

EULALIE DE LA PROVIDENCE.

(DIED MARCH, 1875.)



HE stood within the holy place
Of penitence and prayer;
Even with the sunbeams on her face,
I could not think her fair.—
Not hers youth's calmly radiant pride,
Nor beauty's softer glow;
Those spells whose powers so often hide
The barrenness below.

I see her still,—as silently
She stood there, pale and meek,—
A worn-out nun,—no light in eye,
Nor colour in her cheek!
But yet, some fire divine had cast
Her life within its mould,

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

And all the story of that past
Upon her face was told.

In every deep-ploughed line the token
Lay, of some touching grace;
Though the heart's joy-spring might be
broken,

Yet, Peace had ta'en its place!
Self-conquest, Patience, Love, Regret, —
By Truth's unfaltering hand;
Were not these symbols clearly set
For all to understand?

She knelt; the rest her looks had worn
Seemed deepening round her there;
And half I felt my spirit borne
Onwards to meet her prayer.
Such dreams, perhaps, as conquerors choose
Before her thoughts might rise,
As from the windows different hues
Crossed her uplifted eyes.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

I staid, — how long, I do not know ;—
Some spell was o'er me cast ;
A lingerer I, who might not go
Until that prayer was past !
But she has risen ; and now, I see
(The lauds, lamentings, said, —)
That form move onward reverently,
With bent and drooping head.

But then her looks, by some strange chance
Fell on me, — there, apart ;
Startled, I met one searching glance,
That seemed to read my heart ;
I looked away ; they shone too bright, —
Too keen, — those eyes of prayer ;
It was as when we shrink from light
More than our strength can bear.

I rose, and all the treacherous blood
Rushed fiercely to my heart

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

As in the silence there we stood,
So near, yet so apart!
Outward I passed.—That nun and I,
Never again may meet,
But memory bids me, till I die,
Cherish the vision sweet.

CHURCH
OF NOTRE DAME DE BONSECOURS.

(ERECTED 1773.)



DEAR relic of a fruitful Past!

Not yet thy work is done,
Though ninety years have o'er thee
cast

Their shadow and their sun ;
Thou wearest yet, serene and free,—
The ancient stately grace,
And strangers come, to look on thee,—
And know thee in thy place!

The autumn breeze, in tenderest mood,—
Its magic on thee lays;
And ever o'er thee seems to brood
The light of other days.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

The mart is close; more swiftly on
Rushes the living tide!
On all, methinks, those cycles gone,
Breathe as they pass thy side.

What tales thy stones could tell—of power,
Of promise and decay,—
The glorious visions of an hour
That rose and passed away!
What scenes those silent walls might see!
Vain suppliance,—mad regret,
Whose memory, in these days, may be
A troubled darkness yet!

Thy aisles the swelling strains have known,
Of Victory's days of pride;
A radiance through their gloom has shone
On bridegroom and on bride.
And then—those other seasons grew,—
When Plague was in the air,—

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

When myriads saw their doom, and knew
Nothing was left—but Prayer.

Those days are o'er! Still to the skies
Thou lookest, full and free;

Firm, as we hope, t^hou yet mayst rise,
For many a year to be.

All round thee altered; landmarks flown,

The ways, the looks of yore;

But the Man's nature thou hast known,

That changes—nevermore!

CLOTHO, LACHESIS, ATROPOS.

I.



NE, young, lay dying. Quiet, now
The smooth and silver tongue;
And careless, from the death-hued
brow
The matted curls were flung.

Scarce on the pillow moved his head;
Yet, resting ever there,—
Solemn and stately as the dead,
And, like them, coldly fair,—

A woman sat.—Through all the gloom
Of deepening night, her face
Passionless, rayless, in that room
Kept its appointed place.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Who is she?—In her eyes no tears,
No pity, and no strife;
She is “the Fury with the shears
To slit the thin-spun life.”

II.

The hours passed onward.—Still the same
That haunted chamber’s sleep, —
When from the sick man’s couch there came
A muttering, low but deep.

For groans his lips had vainly striven,
But now they spoke in power;—
It was as subtle strength were given
Before the final hour.

Those lips, alas!—spoke nought of prayer,—
Of penitence, or praise;
They told, in those last moments there,—
The story of his days.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

III.

I was a child. The earth, the sky,—
The long-descending beam,—
Made Life the all I could not fly;
A riddle, and a dream.

Its web above me grew and grew,—
Woven in a mystic shroud;
While my wild heart existence drew
From every flower and cloud. —

And if the skies were dim, I brought
My hopes to darkening lands;
And if the heaven was fair, methought
My spirit clapped her hands.

O Sun! O Mother!—thou wert mine,—
In those fair summers past;
The days I worshiped at thy shrine,—
Hast thou forgot at last?

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

It is so much to breathe, to be, —
More than all words have told! —
My eyes, in Death's deep shadows, see
More clearly than of old.

This was my time, — that time when I
Before my days of strife, —
Knew not what fate should o'er me lie, —
But lived an inward life.

IV.

The days passed on. — The shadows deep
Of Life upon me rose.
I had done with fairy tales of sleep, —
I had to meet my foes.

The World, the Flesh, the Devil! — See!
I have known them, each and all;
If Saint Aloysius had been me, —
He had answered to their call.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

But one thing might have saved me yet,—
I asked a perfect friend;
One to reproach not, nor forget,—
But love unto the end.

Thou, in Thy righteousness full soon,
O Lord! didst fix my lot;
I had not merited such boon,—
And so,—Thou gav'st it not.

V.

The days passed on.—In manhood's prime
All know some radiant hours;
Are there not also things whose slime
One finds among the flowers?—

Everywhere, everywhere the same;
Wherever eyes may fall,—
Or thought pause,—still the hue of shame,
The serpent's trail o'er all.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

My visions fell before me then,—
Fell,—for they could not save.
“Deceitful are the hearts of men,—
And cruel as the grave.”
“From my youth up Thy terrors, Lord,—
I have suffered in my mind.”
When I am gone, be this dread word
The last I leave behind.

VI.

Life spread before me, a vast plain,—
More boundless than the sea;
I walked on, wondering, in my pain,—
Such its immensity.
I walked on and my feet would tire,—
And stumble here and there;
It was as though Life's central fire
Died in a thought's despair.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

And, sudden as I looked,—my brow
Scars of remorse, regret,—
I felt the end was nearing now,—
Life's bitter sun would set.

Ah! did I mourn?—When one has lain
Long years on dungeon-floor,—
Is it sad there comes an end to pain,—
That Angels ope the door?

My God! my God! Thou gav'st me life
Without my wish or will;
Thou doom'st me not, through wastes of
strife,—
To walk and suffer still.

Thou, my Soul, knowest, whatever lies
Beyond this life of ours,—
Can not be bitterer than its sighs,—
More fading than its flowers.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

And, be this natural thrill of fear, —
Be it exulting pride, —
I know not, — but my foes shall hear
“He lives, — and he has died.”

“Their murmurs, like the ocean-sands, —
About my thoughts are blown.
I am taken from their cruel hands, —
And rest with Death alone.

VII.

“Ah, Lord! — these bitter words forgive, —
Wrung from my agony!
Thou hast known well what it was to live,
And camest here to die.

“Thou knowest my heart is only dumb
Through all it longs to say;
Thou knowest this bitterness has come
From hopes that went astray.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

“Thou knowest this soul of mine is dull, —
Poisoned with anguish past.
Oh, is it not most merciful
Man shall not judge at last?

“I can recall one angel fair, —
Who has run the bitter race, —
Loved me on earth and loves me there,
Before the throne of grace.

“In life Thou gav’st her, Lord, to me,
To warn, console, and guide;
In my death-hour, O let me see
That vision at my side!”

The gasping voice died down; that voice
Once all o’erflowing power;
Its weakness might his heart rejoice, —
Sign of the mystic hour.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

There raised itself a wasted hand,—
And pointed to the door.
Atropos rose.—I saw her stand
Beside his couch no more.

But when the morn, slow glimmering red,—
Her rays upon him cast,—
“He has seen the Angel,”—then I said;
“She was with him at the last.”

THE FAIR BRIDEGROOM.



SWEET, sweet Death! Thou seem'st
to rise

Out of the sunset deep;
Thou kissest me between the eyes,—
To wake me from my sleep.

Life's sleep of woe! — Thou honorest me;
I lie within thine arms;
Held in that clasp, I can but see
Thy pity and thy charms.

“My Heart!”—thou sayest,—“my Heart! I
yearned

For thee, in all thy ways;
Saw how, each hour, thy spirit turned
From Earth's embittered days.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

“It mattered not, by land or sea ;
Ever thy sorrows there ;
The peace these hands have kept for thee
Shall *match* thy long despair.

“For these slow clouds, there shall be skies
Serene as thy desire ;
For tears that never left thine eyes, —
A vision as of fire.

“For words that died in agony
Triumphant hymns shall wave
Their soft-Tone-banners, true and free, —
Above thy happy grave.”

AT THE END.

“I saw, also, that there was an ocean of darkness and death; but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. In that, also, I saw the infinite love of God.” —GEORGE FOX’S JOURNAL.



HIS, not that, is true, mine own;
True, — far beyond these sighs;
Just as I see not eyes alone
Looking from out thine eyes.

Just as I hear not issuing words
From out those lips serene;
Instead, — the truth of flashing swords
Such as might guard a queen.

There is a spirit-radiancy
That sight must all forego;

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

It is not thy mortality
Thyself that makes me know.

Thus,—when all hopes but mockery seem,—
All shadows one, — Despair;
Thyself, — the real within a dream. —
Flashest upon me there;

And, whatsoever light or grace
May yet be mine, •I see
No sweeter memory than your face, —
God's loving thought for me!

The days depart; — the black waves rise
About life's barren strand;
There is no freshness in the skies
No greenness on the land.

But God looks on; His hand is there, —
Where 'nought but chaos seems;

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

He brings, from discords of despair, —
The music of our dreams.

And now, look close ! the black waves creep,
Lessening their noisome strife;
And *other* waters o'er them sweep, —
Bearing the hues of life.

These triumph, and not those!—We see
The olive-branch, the dove;
Not Death, but Life, our destiny;
Not Hate at last but Love.

LINES

ON THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE OF
COMMONS, ON RECEIVING TIDINGS OF THE
DEATH OF SIR GEORGE CORNEWALL
LEWIS, BART., SECRETARY OF WAR,
APRIL 14, 1863.



HE ranks are gathered, — not to fight,
To struggle, or to dare;
Ah, no, — for on this meeting night
Far other thoughts are there.
Hushed is th' upbraiding word — the
flow
Of passion calmed to peace;
One mightier shoots his bolt, and lo!
Earth's petty tumults cease.
And faction's reign itself is past,
For one brief — solemn hour;

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

As brothers here they bend at last,
Before a sterner power !

Few are the words, but fitly said,
That speak the sense of all —
That pay due honor to the dead,
His deeds and worth recall.
Opponents rise to touch the theme,
And speak with saddening praise,
Of gifts and powers they well might deem
Deserving longer days.*
Finished those words,—that duty done,
And, till the morrow's light,—
They leave the mighty pile alone,—
To silence and to night !

Kind Heaven ! we would not bend to thee
In bitterness and gloom ;

* Several of Sir George Lewis's strongest political opponents expressed, on this occasion, their high sense of his virtues and talents, and their deep regret at his untimely death.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Thy mercy only might decree
The mercy of the tomb!
Grant us—these years, that fade so fleet,
To guide, in strength and power;
Grant us, prepared and calm, to meet
The last and final hour;
Grant us, when all our path is trod,
As loved to reach the grave,
As he, who rests beneath the sod,
Where Cambrian blue-bells wave!

“SAVED.”



“SAVED!” — But I wandered far and
wide, —

Where rocks and thorns were set ;
My heart no single instant tried
To scale its Olivet.

“Saved!” But one thing alone I knew, —

Despair, — that filled my soul ;
All else was shadowy, this was true, —
My anguish and my goal.

“Saved!” Though an angel spoke the words,
Could they be true for me ?

When God’s hand so has crushed the chords,
Can they speak victory ?

“Saved!” But the victory is not mine, —
If mine the last defeat ;

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

If the unearned gift, O Lord, be thine,—
At least,—such gift were sweet.
“Saved!” But a sinner once drew life
’Twixt stirrup and the ground;
There must be peace beyond the strife,—
When what was lost, is found.

FROM THE GERMAN OF HEINE.

I.



DEATH is the night, so cool and free;
Our life the sultry day;
Already fades its light for me;
I am weary of the way.

Above my bed a tree grows near;
There sings the nightingale;
She only sings of love; I hear
Even in my dreams her tale.

II.

I wept once in my sleep; I thought
Thou wast laid within the grave;
I woke, and that dark dream had brought
Salt tears my cheeks to lave.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

I wept once in my sleep; I dreamed
Thou hadst forsaken me;
I woke, the mournful torrents streamed
Yet long and bitterly.

I wept once in my sleep; I dreamed
Thou still to me wast good;
I woke, and yet forever streamed
My passionate weeping's flood.

FROM KARL GEROK.

GOLGOTHA.

“I have in my thought travelled through many times, even through the Eternities; but God be praised, wherever I have come, nothing has touched my heart like Golgotha.” — ZINZENDORFF.



THROUGH the dim ways of many lands,
The Wanderer's staff I bore;
From many a rocky point these eyes
Have traced the valleys o'er,
But far beyond each earthly hill
That Memory makes her own, —
There rises to my vision still, —
Golgotha's mount alone.

It lifts not upward to the clouds
An ice-crowned forehead high;

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Men watch it not, through sunny air,—
 “Flatter with sovran eye;” *
But lifted firm from earth away,—
 Set near to Heaven at last,—
I have but felt, upon the day
 I by Golgotha passed.

Upon its desolate forehead bare,—
 No woody crownlet lies;
Neither the oak, serene and fair,—
 Nor cedar’s mysteries;
But cedars, kingliest of the land
 That Hermon’s slopes could know,—
They bow their heads unto the dust
 Golgotha’s cross below.

Nothing is there that we behold
 Of Earth’s bewildering pride,—
Not fields, bedecked with green and gold,—
 Nor silver streamlets wide;

* Shakespeare, Sonnet xxxiii.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

But all earth's glare before my view
Fell, as a shadow flies,—
When on Golgotha's cross I knew
The atoning Sacrifice.

Yonder no little brooklet peeps
From mossy stone or sand;
No proud stream from that summit leaps
Downward into the land;
But from that cross's stem there flows
Through all lands, rich and fair,—
The spring of everlasting life;
Golgotha's blood is there.

About that mountain's brow there flowers
No golden sunshine sweet;
Year in, year out, strange, tempest-powers
Seem ever there to meet;
But where the bluest, loveliest heaven
O'er Greece and Rome may shine,—

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

Those holy shadows were not given
That made Golgotha mine.

The haughty heathen striketh here
In penitence, his breast;
The sinner's death-song rises clear
Among the spirits blest;
But yonder angel-harps may raise
A sacred Gloria,—
The Eternities forever praise
The deed of Golgotha.

Thou poor, soul-poisoned Pilgrim, stay:
Yonder is rest for thee;
He, the Sin-bearer, takes thy doom
To give thee Liberty;
Thou need'st not any more to roam
Unhealed beneath the skies;
And yet,—the way unto thy home
Over Golgotha lies.

SONG OF AUTUMN.

(FROM THE FRENCH.)



HE flower already faded now
Burns in the sunlight deep;
Crowned with foreboding and with woe
Earth enters in its sleep.

Let us unveil our thoughts alone,—
At Memory's mournful call;
We dream on all things past and gone
Under these leaves that fall.

The heart, humane and generous, sighs
Over all sweetness past;
Soft yearnings in the spirit rise
For what is dead at last.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

As through these withered leaves we go,—
Too plainly it appears,—
How much must wound the heart below,
And fill the eyes with tears.

Regarding then our life, we see
How sweet and blest a one,—
Through every sorrow, it may be
So it have Love alone;

We give to God, upon our knees,—
Thanks for His mercy's sake,—
And of our vows, that cannot cease,—
A double prayer we make.

TO A FATHER
ON THE DEATH OF HIS DAUGHTER.

(FROM THE FRENCH OF MALHERBE.)



MY sorrow, then, my friend, shall last
forever?

And memories of the past, —
That thy paternal heart may vanquish
never, —

Still haunt thee to the last?

Thy daughter's fate, — thus to the tomb de-
scending, —

To meet the fate of all, —
Is that some maze, where Reason, dimly
wending? —

Cannot itself recall?

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

I know the cares, the hopes, that marked her
way, —

That filled her childhood's years ;
Injurious friend ! — I have not sought to stay
The current of thy tears.

But she was of this world, where things most
bright

Fade swiftest to decay ;
A rose, she bloomed like roses in the light
One morn, — and passed away.

Death has her terrors, like to none beside ;
We pray and shriek in vain ;
The torturer, deafened with remorseless pride,
But leaves us to our pain.

The peasant, in the hut where poor men wait,
Before her rule must cower ;
Nor can the guards that watch the palace gate
Defend the monarch's power.

LAI.

Lais were the lyric poetry of the old French poets, who were imitated by some amongst the English. They were principally used on melancholy subjects, and are said to have been formed on the model of the trochaic verses of the Greek and Latin tragedies. Pere Mourguy gives us a pleasing instance of one of these ancient lais, in his 'Treatise of French Poetry':—

Sur l'appuis du monde
Que faut il qu'on fonde?
D'espoir ?
Cette mer profonde,
En débris feconde
Fait voir
Calme au matin, l'onde
Et l'orage y gronde
Le soir.

STUDIES FOR POEMS.

TRANSLATION.

In the world's faith, — uncertain, blind, —
What is the trust our hearts may find
Hope's dream of light? —
That dim, profound, and treacherous sea,
Fruitful in wrecks and woes to be, —
Gives to our sight
Seems calm at morn, — where surging wave
And hurrying tempests howl and rave, —
Ere sinks the night!



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21 10 10 10 10

INDEX.

	Page
A Christmas Song,	99
A Death Bed,	18
A First View of Quebec,	91
Amine,	34
An Oriental Salutation,	33
At the End,	124
Church Bells in Venice,	86
Church of Notre Dame de Bonsecours,	109
Clotho, Lachesis, Atropos,	112
Dying Song of the Italian Soldier,	24
Elmire's Portrait,	85
Eulalie de la Providence,	105
Fate and Free-will,	56
From Karl Gerok — Golgotha,	134
From the German of Heine,	132
In Autumn,	97
In Milan Cathedral,	78
L'Affinita,	10

INDEX.

	Page
Lai,	142
Lines suggested by Two Stone Figures at Rouen	
Cathedral,	48
Mala Prohibita—Mala in Se,	53
On the Adjournment of the House of Commons on the death of Sir George Cornwall Lewis, Bart.,	127
Prelude,	5
Saved,	130
Song of Autumn,	138
Teresa of Avila before her Crucifix,	31
The Choice,	102
The Fair Bridegroom,	122
The Grave of Fenice,	81
The Mystical Land,	74
The Nun,	28
The Prisoner of the Hunger Tower,	64
The Roots of Life,	61
The Voyage of the Petrel,	40
To a Father on the Death of his Daughter,	140
To a Friend,	88
To Clarice,	16
To my Sister of the Sacred Heart,	7
Two Springs,	94
We are Three,	38

